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REPLIES TO MR. HOLMES.

"Farmer's Wife" Handles the Chief Without Gloves in a Letter to the Sun.

The next time Mr. Holmes says anything about the farmer's wife he will know better, for the following letter sent us for publication by a farmer's wife is a scathing reply to the report which the TRANSCRIPT published last week:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Please permit me the space in your valuable paper for a few words in answer to the arraignment of farmer's wives and daughters by George K. Holmes, chief of division of production and distribution of Agricultural Department at Washington, D. C. Mr. Holmes reports that improved living conditions and the lure of social functions have diverted the farmers' wives from putting up the usual store of fruits for winter use on the farmers' tables. Mr. Holmes further says the farmers' wives are neither willing nor able to do as their grandmothers did in days of yore.

As chief of his department Mr. Holmes should be sure of his position before he makes such a sweeping charge as the above. Statistics have proved in the past that more farmers' wives and daughters become insane than any other class of women. Insanity was due to the deadly monotony of their lives. The average farmer's wife can produce a wholesome menu, with good homemade bread, for her family all the year and many times under conditions that would make a city woman hold up her hands in holy horror.

Mr. Holmes truly says conditions have changed. Twenty-five years ago a good domestic could be employed to help a farmer's wife for $5 a month and board, and the said help knew how to do housework and was willing to wash and iron. Today you pay $5 a week with board for domestic help and those employed are only willing to assist with the cooking. Many of them don't know how to make bread and stipulate no extra cleaning or laundry work. And while conditions have improved on the farm the average farmhouse does not have hot and cold water by turning a spigot, and the servant objects to going to the pump in the yard. Besides, with improved farm machinery and the high wages demanded by farm labor, the farmers' wives usually have to do with as little help as possible in order to assist their husbands with their increased expenses. The farmers' wives are the salt of the nation, and instead of criticising so unjustly the Government's servants should study the question and encourage these already overburdened women.

The writer has been mistress of a farm house since she was 16 years old and thinks 30 years experience of farm life should teach her more than a Government employe, who possibly was never on a farm and has certainly made an unjust report. No class of women work as long hours as farmers' wives or more unselfishly, and, as to social functions, has not a farmer's wife as much right to enjoy a little pleasant society as any other business man's wife? Is she to toil her long hours and never have any relaxation? Education is the trouble to-day with domestic help. In our mad race for higher education our children are taught that domestic labor will not give them such a rapid rise in their ambition to succeed, and we have no young women trained as help in a farmer's kitchen. It is beneath their dignity. The lure of the factory and department store and city life attracts the girls from sweet, clean, wholesome country life.

The writer personally knows many women who make lovely homes for their loved ones and cheerfully rise at 5 A. M. and many times do not finish supper dishes until 8 P. M. They manage to attend a few social affairs and enjoy themselves. Among their other joys is endurance of a succession of farm laborers whose table manners are at zero and who leave filthy rooms for the farmer's wife to clean out many times during the year, as each new laborer rises in the farm horizon.

I agree with Mr. Holmes as to the farmers' wives not doing as their grandmothers did. My grandmother had a number of slave women in her kitchen, and while she ran her spinning wheel and loom the colored women did the housework. I do kitchen work, play lady, mending, darning, and knitting, am secretary for my husband and do many other things that farm life renders needful in a wide-awake farm woman. If our Government only employs men to report or censure our farmers' wives, it had better clean house when Governor Wilson assumes the Presidential office, or else the farmers' wives may be tempted to become women suffragists, to the further detriment of their work.

FARMER'S WIFE.
Monkton, Md., Nov. 11.

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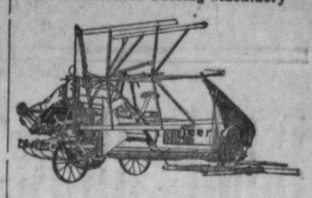
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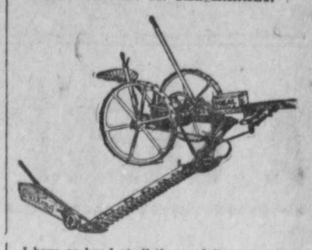
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